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Mir loses all power after accident

Disconnected cable restored; crew reported safe

Mir

July 17, 1997
Web posted at: 8:04 a.m. EDT (1204 GMT)



MOSCOW (CNN) -- Space station Mir lost all power and began drifting on Thursday when the crew accidentally disconnected a vital cable which was later reconnected. Despite the "serious trouble," the crew was not in immediate danger, U.S. and Russian space officials said.

The three-man team retreated to the Soyuz escape capsule, which has systems independent from the rest of the Mir.

The two Russians and one American were using backup oxygen canisters while working to restore power in the darkened orbiter.

NASA spokeswoman Eileen Hawley explains what went wrong

141 K / 13 sec. [AIFF](#) or [WAV](#) audio

NASA spokesman Rob Navias gives details about the mishap

489 K / 45 sec. [AIFF](#) or [WAV](#) audio

The disconnected cable supplies electricity to Mir's orientation system, which points the spacecraft's solar panels to the sun. The error cut power to all systems -- electricity, orientation, life support and communications.

"The lights went out, Mir lost its automatic steering system, the air conditioner failed and temperatures started rising," CNN's John Holliman reported.

The Mir was twisting chaotically and its solar panels were not facing the sun, said Mission Control chief Vladimir Solovyov.



scientists



The spacecraft was in "free drift," Holliman said. He added, however, that Soyuz "has its own steering system that can be used to prevent (Mir) from falling out of orbit."

Even though the lost cable connection was restored "almost immediately, it was enough to make Mir's computer brain lose an electrical impulse," Moscow Bureau Chief Jill Dougherty reported. "In effect, the computer went crazy and that's when they lost orientation."

NASA spokesman Don Sickorez, speaking from the Johnson Space Center in Houston, said it would take one to two days to recharge the batteries.

The accident occurred as the crew was making preparations for a spacewalk to repair Mir's already damaged power system.

"It was a human error, but everyone can make a mistake," said Solovyov.

The Mir has been working at slightly more than half-power since a June 25 collision with a cargo ship.

The repair mission, which already has been delayed twice, is currently set for next Thursday and Friday. However, that schedule appeared in doubt because of the latest setback.

Moscow Bureau Chief [Jill Dougherty](#) and Correspondents [John Holliman](#) and Paul Caron contributed to this report.

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